



CURIA GENERALIZIA DELLA COMPAGNIA DI GESÙ

Jesuit Schools: A Living Tradition

2019/25

TO THE WHOLE SOCIETY

Dear Friends in the Lord,

On December 8, 1986, during the celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the first Ratio Studiorum, Fr. General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach wrote to all Major Superiors to announce the publication of the document *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* as a continuation of the educational tradition that the Society of Jesus began with the Ratio. *Characteristics* was not intended to be a new Ratio Studiorum. Rather, according to Fr. Kolvenbach's words, it aimed to provide "a common vision and a common sense of purpose... a standard against which we measure ourselves."

Fr. Kolvenbach hoped that this document could assist in the necessary discernment to find the most suitable means "to accomplish faithfully and effectively the mission received, taking into account continually changing circumstances" (Fr. Kolvenbach, letter of December 8, 1986 quoting his own letter on *Apostolic Discernment in Common*, n°32, dated November 5, 1986).

Seven years later, in 1993, Fr. Kolvenbach introduced a new document, *Ignatian Pedagogy: A Practical Approach*, better known as the *Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm*, that provided a pedagogical style for the classroom embodying the characteristics described in the previous document.

No doubt, these two documents have greatly contributed to the processes of discernment and renewal that have made our schools, and many other Jesuit institutions these documents influenced, better adapted to the changing circumstances of our world and the needs of the new generations we educate.

Today I want to present a new document, *Jesuit Schools: a Living Tradition in the 21ST Century – An Ongoing Exercise of Discernment*. The document follows this tradition of assisting our educational apostolate in reflecting and discerning the particular challenges and opportunities of our time. It continues the necessary process of renewal, innovation and re-imagination that our education requires during this change of epoch that we experience today. The best tribute that we can offer to our long tradition in education is to explore new models, creative and imaginative ways to offer our spiritual vision and educational experience to our students and their families. Thus, the title of the document reflects well its purpose: to renew our living tradition in education as an ongoing exercise of discernment.

This document must be seen within the framework of the process of discernment that our educational apostolate has kept alive since *Characteristics* and the *Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm* were first published. This process has continued more recently with a cycle of global gatherings: a Colloquium in Boston in 2012, an International Seminar in Manresa in 2014 and the First Congress of Jesuit Education Delegates – JESEDU-Rio in Rio de Janeiro in 2017. The process will continue with a Second Colloquium in Jogjakarta, Indonesia, in 2020 with the



framework of the Universal Apostolic Preferences as an important dimension of this discernment.

This document provides 10 key identifiers of Jesuit Schools. These are another important element to help in the reflection about what makes a Jesuit school today Jesuit, enabling us to navigate the challenge of keeping our identity to serve our mission of reconciliation and justice central to what we do and who we are. Of particular importance today is identifier number 2: *committed to creating a safe and healthy environment for all*. Our schools have been implementing policies and protocols to avoid, identify and respond to any kind of abuse. The challenge is to continue this path and model the necessary cultural change that our societies require to create safe and healthy environments for all.

The *Living Tradition* does not replace the previous documents; rather, it complements and updates them as an ongoing exercise of discernment. The three should be taken together as the contemporary framework of Jesuit Education. The *Living Tradition* wants also to respond to the acceleration of change that we experience today, and that is why the document itself is an unfinished discernment, *a living text* that invites educators in our schools to enrich it with their reflections, experiences and contributions. In this sense, this is an open-ended document that models the discernment it aims to inspire, and it wants to provide guidelines to continue the *education of men and women for and with others* in the context of the human excellence that distinguishes our educational tradition.

I want to thank the members of the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE) for their work during the past 8 years to produce this document. As with the previous documents on education, the *Living Tradition* has been enriched by numerous drafts, discussions, worldwide feedback, consultations and the participation of specialized Ignatian educators.

Now, the challenge is to make the document an effective tool to animate the necessary discernment for our apostolate of education. The Second Colloquium JESSEDU-Jogja2020, as the first global gathering of the new cycle, will introduce the document for an experience of virtual colloquium at the beginning of 2020. I ask Major Superiors, after the document is introduced, to ensure that it is widely known, distributed, used and discussed in their provinces and regions by all educators and everyone involved in the schools. Provincial assistants for education will have good ideas about the best ways to make this document available to the schools, to inspire the ongoing discernment on how best to conduct our education today in the local, regional and global realities in which we serve. The document should be presented within the framework of the *Universal Apostolic Preferences* and the renewal of the apostolic vigor required by them, as I have presented to you in previous letters.

Yours sincerely in the Lord,

Arturo Sosa, S.I.
Superior General

Rome, November 5, 2019
Feast of all the Saints of the Society
(Original: English)